

86<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session – 2011

Committee: Joint Appropriations

Tuesday, March 08, 2011

P - Present  
E - Excused  
A - Absent

Roll Call

P Sutton  
P Haverly  
P Novstrup (Al)  
P Peters  
P Putnam  
P Rampelberg  
P Dennert  
P Wismer  
P Juhnke  
P Bolin  
P Romkema  
P Dryden  
P White  
P Tidemann  
P Carson  
E Brown, Vice-Chair  
P Wink, Chair

OTHERS PRESENT: See Original Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Representative Dean Wink.

MOTION: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 3, 2011

Moved by: Tidemann  
Second by: Carson  
Action: Prevailed by voice vote.

MOTION: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 7, 2011

Moved by: Carson  
Second by: Tidemann  
Action: Prevailed by voice vote.

MOTION: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 1, 2011

Moved by: Putnam  
Second by: Juhnke  
Action: Prevailed by voice vote.

MOTION: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 23, 2011

Moved by: White  
Second by: Dryden  
Action: Prevailed by voice vote.

MOTION: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 24, 2011

Moved by: Juhnke  
Second by: Carson  
Action: Prevailed by voice vote.

**Bureau of Information and Telecommunications  
Follow-up on State Radio**

**Mr. Jim Edman**, Interim Commissioner of the Bureau of Information and Telecommunication (BIT) and **Mr. Jeff Pierce**, Director of the State Radio, was present to answer committee questions pertaining to State Radio.

**Representative H. Paul Dennert** asked if the proposed \$6 million upgrade to the State Radio will help the Brown County area by improving the service or will the local governments need to continue maintaining two separate radio systems. Interim Commissioner stated that the State Radio has approximately 95% coverage of the state, so there are some areas that don't receive coverage. The BIT may not have been aware of the problems in Brown County and will fix problems if possible. He noted that BIT can fix equipment problems, but coverage issues are problems that can't be resolved right now due to lack of towers, funding, and the current system being at maximum capacity for consoles.

Mr. Pierce noted that the BIT has added 18 sites to the system since 2002. The agency has worked with local governments to get upgrades. With the current system being at capacity for sites and consoles, BIT is not able to increase the connections to the system.

**Senator Phyllis Heineman** asked about the equipment upgrades. Mr. Pierce stated that part of the system that needs to be upgraded is the section that connects the tower sites across the state. If the component is lost, then the entire system would be dissolved and only able to be operated as separate sites. There is a three step process for the upgrades – network, Project 25 software, and P25 network. The radios that the state purchased for the highway patrol are not compatible and are in the process of being upgraded using Homeland Security funds. The radios purchased by the local governments can be upgraded to the new system.

**Senator J.E. “Jim” Putnam** asked if the mandate is unfunded. Mr. Pierce stated that the upgrade is a standard set by the federal government. There are no off-setting funds by the federal government to cover the upgrade. The \$1 million will go towards the network upgrade.

The committee asked about the 95% coverage rate and possibilities of improvement. Mr. Pierce stated that the coverage refers to land mass. There are some areas that will need additional towers to cover due to the geography of the land (i.e. hills or valleys that block the signal). The only way to address the situation in Brown County is by getting another tower.

**Senator Bruce Rampelberg** asked about the possibility of using satellites for communication. Mr. Pierce stated that the BIT reviewed the concept and it is too expensive to install and maintain for the state to rely on satellites for the overall communication system. However, it is a possibility to use as a backup.

MOTION: ADJOURN

Moved by: Carson  
Second by: Juhnke  
Action: Prevailed by voice vote.

Lisa Shafer  
Committee Secretary

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Dean Wink, Chair